

The Messenger.

OFFICIAL PAPER OF THE CITY.

FRIDAY, DEC. 26, 1873.

AN OLD-FASHIONED REMEDY.

Work Versus Herb-Tea.
Mrs. Whitaker was much troubled about Susan. All summer she had been in a pale, languid, half-alive condition, with no strength, no appetite, no interest in anything. Mrs. Whitaker, having a never-failing remedy for such cases, had at first rather enjoyed this opportunity of trying the virtues of the various roots and herbs that hung in dry, dusty bundles from the garret rafters. Susan's life had been a burden to her with its dose of thoroughness, pennyroyal, tansy, dandelion and her dock. There was always a big bowl of black, bitter herb-tea standing in the pantry, which it was equally the object of Mrs. Whitaker's life to induce Susan to take, and the object of Susan's to escape.

And still Susan lay around the house in an exceedingly listless, restless, studying her symptoms in the "Family Advertiser," and eating out such scraps of poetry from the newspapers as dwelt on the holiness of the world, unappreciated loveliness and early death.

Ned Whitaker, Susan's younger brother, was decidedly sceptical on the subject of her illness. "It's enough to make any one sick to see Sue do," he said energetically. "If she'd get up earlier in the morning and do a little house work she'd get well twice as quick as she will now, doing and reading."

"A great deal you know about it," retorted Susan, with considerable vigor for an invalid; "I like to hear boys talk. They know so much in their own estimation."

"See here, Sue! What if that interesting young school-master should hear you speak to your dear brother? It don't sound very angelic."

Sue said nothing, only blushed a little and assumed that plaintive, weakly injured look, which says plainly, "You'll be sorry for this when you grow old."

"Fudge," said Ned, quite unimpressed. "Don't look so spoony," and off he went, whistling and banging the door.

It was a fact, that there had been a good looking young school-master the previous winter, a school-master who had not loved, but doted, and "rode away." Perhaps Susan, having noticed this, had placed herself off dancing, as she was in love with a gay deceiver. A girl must do something. Mrs. Whitaker was one of those indefatigable, irrepresible women, a scrupulously neat and exact housekeeper, who loved hard work for its own sake, and "didn't want any one bothering around."

At one time, Sue had quite a run for cooking, but Mrs. Whitaker, after witnessing her awkward struggles with the bread dough, said:

"Come, let me take it. It's easier for me to do myself than to see you do. You'll keep the sitting room in order, and take care of your own room, it's all I'll ask."

And now Mrs. Whitaker thought Susan so delicate she relieved her of even these light duties, and left her with nothing to do but realize, in her own experience, the truth of the saying:

"A millstone and the human heart are ever driven round."

If they have nothing else to grind, they must themselves be grinded, to know all the weariness of an empty, useless life.

September came, and yet Susan remained in a state of discouraging apathy—the same Mrs. Whitaker thought she would drive over and assault Aunt Debbie Dunbar.

Aunt Debbie was a woman of vast experience in sickness. She had brought a large family of her own successfully through all the mumps, measles, and other infantile fevers in her life, and was now experimenting on a yearly increasing circle of grandchildren, besides acting as adviser general for the whole neighborhood. What Aunt Debbie didn't know about doctoring was generally considered no worth knowing at all.

As Mrs. Whitaker drove up the deserted Aunt Debbie's ample form out in the garden, bending over the sage bed, at the sound of wheels she straightened up, pushed her sun bonnet back and peered sharply through her spectacles to see who was going by.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, as Mrs. Whitaker drove into the yard. "If it ain't you, Miss Whitaker! I was just thinking about you. How dear ye do! Seems as if I hadn't seen you for an age. Com' right along in, and kiss 'n' hug your horse out."

"Thank you, but I've only come for a call; I can't stop long."

"Well, how'd ye all do at home?" asked Aunt Debbie, after she had ushered her visitor into the sitting room, rolled up one green paper curtain, and nestled down to her knitting. Aunt Debbie could not at all talk with her knitting work in hand.

"Pretty well, thank you, except Susan. I came over partly to see about her. She don't seem to get along as I should like to have her. Miss Haskell was called me last Sunday, how ill! Susan's been, this summer. From what Miss Haskell said I should think she's a

good deal as my Melissa was five years ago. I cared Melissa with bonnet."

"Susan's been taking that, more or less, all summer."

"Does she cough any?"

"No."

"Because, if she did, cold foot tea is a grand thing. Ain't she bilious?"

"I shouldn't wonder if she was."

"Well, now if she was my girl I should give her a good dose of blue pill to begin with, and follow it out with a smart course of castor oil or salts. I should keep right on with the bonnet three times a day."

"—'tis very strengthening!—and I'd have her take a raw egg in half a glass of cider every mornin' before breakfast. That's one of the best things I know of for weakly folks. Is she nervous about sleep?"

"Yes, she is, rather."

"There's nuthin' so good for nervousness as hop tea. Give her some every night, the last thing before she goes to bed, and make her a hop pillow. I guess if you follow her up thoroughly you'll bring her out all right. There's nuthin' like that."

"Aunt Debbie, with the emphatic air of long experience."

After much further advice, Mrs. Whitaker set out for home, burning with zeal to follow up Susan with all Aunt Debbie's prescriptions. What the consequences would have been to poor Susan if she should have followed her, is a fate kindly interposed in her behalf.

It seems a clear case of one "born in the woods to be scared at an owl," that the old Whitaker horse should take into his ancient head to be frightened at a moving machine. But such was actually the fact. As he was slowly joggling along, head down, apparently lost in memory of his far away youth, he came suddenly upon Deacon Fossket's rattling, clattering mowing machine. Up went his head, one short, one jump side ways, and away he plunged down the hill, twirling the reins away from Mrs. Whitaker's hands by the suddenness of his unexpected start. A big rut at the foot of the hill—over goes the wagon on top of Mrs. Whitaker—and Deacon Fossket and his hired man run down the hill to find Mrs. Whitaker with one leg broken, a sprained shoulder, and any amount of bruises and wrundings.

What was to become of the Whitakers, now that the main support of the domestic wheel was useless? They'll hire a girl, of course, suggests the intelligent reader. But hiring a girl in Tully was no such trifling matter. A small factory in the village absorbed all the American girls in the vicinity, who would otherwise have worked in families, and there being no Catholic church within ten miles, the Irish girl who could be induced to live on a farm was a rare acquisition.

Mr. Whitaker devoted a week to driving over the hills in different directions in pursuit of "various myths of possible girls," that vanished into his air on closer inspection. Now Mr. Haskell had heard of a very nice girl over in Benham, Franklin Lester's wife's sister, who was anxious to secure a place. By the time Mr. Whitaker had reached Benham the nice girl had engaged to teach at home, but Mrs. Whitaker, who had found Mrs. Goodman had certain "widow woman" on Stony Hill. Mr. Whitaker lies him to Stony Hill to find the widow goes to keep house for her brother.

"I declare," said Mr. Whitaker to Susan, who had returned, "girlless as a spook!" from his long drive, "I believe I wanted a wife I could get six easier than I can one girl!"

"Don't try any more, father!" said Susan. "We can get along some how. Ned and I can do the work."

"That's so," said Ned. "We'll make a bully team."

"Don't be so low, Ned," said Susan, who had just returned from her usual delectable task of "elevating" Ned. Boys recent "elevating" especially by their own sisters, and accordingly Ned rather exulted in being so alangy in Susan's presence.

But now a feeble wail was heard from the bed room where poor Mrs. Whitaker lay, frowny and helpless on her restless couch.

"You must get a girl, father," she remonstrated. "Susan can't do the work. It will kill her. She isn't strong enough, and besides she don't know how. Oh dear, if I could only get up and take hold myself! I can't be reconciled to be lying here when there's so much to do."

To soothe his wife, Mr. Whitaker promised to try once more, and finally one night drove into the yard in triumph, seated on a small hand truck, the owner of the trunk, an actual girl in propria persona, a band-box in hand, sitting in state on the seat behind.

The new girl's name was Luna, "pale Luna," Ned called her. She was tall and bony, wore her hair cut short in the neck, and rejoiced in a base voice that was a perpetual surprise. She was briskly and unhesitatingly, that, if not "dark" was decidedly uncomfortable. Ned always declined before she came, as she cut the air with her mouth, "to please it." No matter what she had previously been doing, she started Mrs. Whitaker's beef tea with her finger without going through the ceremony of washing her hands, and tasted it freely with the same spoon Susan offered her.

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When Mrs. Whitaker heard that Luna prepared the potatoes for dinner in the wash-hand basin, and put the best tea knives soaking in the bottom of the pan while she did the other dishes, tea knives whose glossy handles were Mrs. Whitaker's pride, her indignation knew no bounds.

"I won't have her in the house any more! I can't sleep till she is out of it! The ideal! My best tea knives! I've been so particular never even to dampen the handles, and always kept them put away in tissue paper, and now they are ruined! Do get her out of the house before she spoils everything in it, and poisons us all!"

Luna went. Susan cleaned up the house, and prayed, whatever other calamity might be in store for them, they might at least be spared another girl. Susan was a much better now. Her mother's illness had taken her out of her exertion, and she was now a work with a will, equally pleased and surprised to find herself ready for good for something. Ned helped her all he could, and novel were some of the experiments of what he called the "new girls."

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"Where?" exclaimed Ned. "You're a good provender! Sue, it seems to me you are rather overdoing this bean business. I feel about beans as the old lady's hired man did about liver. He liked it well enough for fifty or sixty days, but didn't care about it for a steady diet."

"Don't laugh, Ned," said poor Sue, looking anxious and embarrassed. "I've had a really dreadful time with the things. I positively believe three beans would have been enough."

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"Taint right yet," said Ned, with an air of wisdom and experience. "Dab in some more."

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"But Susan's experiences were not all so disastrous. Mrs. Whitaker was quite astounded to see how well things went on. She really began to think Susan was a natural cook." Daughters of such notable housekeepers as Mrs. Whitaker are apt to be "natural cooks." Order and method is the rule of a house, and they adopt, instinctively, "mother's way" of doing things. A certain definiteness and skill is hereditary with them. Perhaps, if Susan had, as she sometimes wished in the old dreamy days, been an authoress, her proudest triumphs would have given her no deeper thrill of pleasure than when her father said:

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"You're growing handsome, Sue," said he.

Sue thought Ned was making fun of her, thereby, for once, doing him injustice. For there is no surer cosmetic and beautifier than housework, when not carried to excess. No amount of dumb-bells, flesh-brushes, "constitutional" walks and drives gives the energy, the vigor, the cheerful tone to body and mind that comes from the vigorous, varied exercise of housework. Sue, who was briskly and unhesitatingly, that, if not "dark" was decidedly uncomfortable. Ned always declined before she came, as she cut the air with her mouth, "to please it." No matter what she had previously been doing, she started Mrs. Whitaker's beef tea with her finger without going through the ceremony of washing her hands, and tasted it freely with the same spoon Susan offered her.

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And so Sue had grown plump and rosy, had a buoyant step, a light and sparkle in her eyes, the radiance in looks and spirit that comes from a sound mind in a sound body.

On Monday, Sue was in the clothes-draw, trying to hang out the clothes. Sue was short, and the line high up, and the wind blowing a gale. It certainly was a provoking wind. It blew Sue's sun-bonnet off, and her curly brown hair into all sorts of wild tangles and tumbles, and the tablecloth she was trying to hang up kept flapping back all over her. Sue stood on tiptoe, straining her arms up, and struggling in vain with the refractory tablecloth.

"Let me help you, Susan," said a pleasant voice.

Sue extricated herself from the maze of the tablecloth, to find Charlie Goodman beside her, Charlie was working in his south lot, which joined the Whitaker's garden, and seeing his neighbor's distress had come to the rescue, like the kind-hearted fellow he was.

"Oh, thank you, Charlie," said Sue, with perhaps more color in her cheeks than the wind was solely responsible for. It was so vexatious to be caught looking up! And Sue hastened to roll down her sleeves, and conceal her blushes under her sun-bonnet, while Charlie hung up the tablecloth, and let the line down within her reach.

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"How nice it is to be tall!" she said. "I'm ever so much obliged to you."

"Not at all. I'm glad to do it. A little body like you ought always to have a tall man around some where handy, to help her," said Charlie, looking not unadmirably down on the flushed face and tangled brown curls under the sun-bonnet.

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The interest Charlie took in Mrs. Whitaker's health was truly touching. He called so often to inquire for her, and listened so politely to all her symptoms, that Mrs. Whitaker took a great fancy to him, and was always telling every one that a remarkably nice young man Charlie Goodman was, on which occasions Sue generally disclaimed that he had an errand in the kitchen, or anywhere out of the room. In "natural cook." Daughters of such notable housekeepers as Mrs. Whitaker are apt to be "natural cooks." Order and method is the rule of a house, and they adopt, instinctively, "mother's way" of doing things. A certain definiteness and skill is hereditary with them. Perhaps, if Susan had, as she sometimes wished in the old dreamy days, been an authoress, her proudest triumphs would have given her no deeper thrill of pleasure than when her father said:

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After getting in four spoonfuls, she concluded it would "do."

The bread came out of the oven a deep yellow brown in hue, and exhaling an overpowering odor of soda. Sue made biscuits for tea, and the pigs revelled in new bread for supper that night. Ned, being implicated, swore solemn secrecy; and, as he used afterward triumphantly to observe, "it didn't kill the pigs, either."

"But Susan's experiences were not all so disastrous. Mrs. Whitaker was quite astounded to see how well things went on. She really began to think Susan was a natural cook." Daughters of such notable housekeepers as Mrs. Whitaker are apt to be "natural cooks." Order and method is the rule of a house, and they adopt, instinctively, "mother's way" of doing things. A certain definiteness and skill is hereditary with them. Perhaps, if Susan had, as

